



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

JOSEPH A. CURTATONE

Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATE HISTORIC COMMISSION AWARDS FUNDS FOR UNION SQUARE PRESERVATION

Mayor Says Rehab At Milk Row, Survey of City's Historic Properties To Compliment Union Square Revitalization

SOMERVILLE – Mayor Curtatone announced today the city would embark on two historic preservation projects made possible by two grants obtained from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Somerville's Historic Preservation Commission was awarded \$45,000 to rehabilitate Milk Row Cemetery on Somerville Avenue, and \$9,000 to conduct a survey of the historic value of 150 properties in the Union Square area and in other neighborhoods. Under terms of each grant, the city will add matching funds – an additional \$45,000 for the cemetery project and \$15,000 for the survey.

"This funding is a strong vote of confidence by the MHC in Somerville's preservation efforts," Curtatone explained. "Given how tight the State's Historical Commission budget has been in recent years, we are particularly honored to have been chosen."

The city has been trying to secure funds to restore the Civil War Monument and several gravestones at the Milk Street Cemetery, which dates back to 1803, as part of a 2002 master plan, prepared by Walker Kluesing Design Group of Boston. The study was made possible through a grant from the State Department of Conservation Resources.

"Although this cemetery is home to an invaluable piece of our community's history, it has been adversely affected by natural wear and tear and by its location on a crowded, busy, urban street. Curtatone said. "This grant will allow us to restore an essential part of our history."

The survey grant will allow the city to hire two professional consultants to conduct an extensive review of approximately 150 properties identified by the city's Preservation Commission as likely to meet statewide and national historic designation criteria. Most of the properties are located in East Somerville and Union Square. Due to fiscal constraints, it has been more than 15 years since the city has been unable to undertake such a substantial property survey.

After the survey concludes, the city's Historic Preservation Commission will officially designate the buildings that match the criteria as historic. Such a designation curtails current and future owners from substantial inappropriate alteration of the structures and helps preserve another critical element of Somerville's history, just as Union Square revitalization is slated to begin.

"As development pressures and land costs continue to escalate in Somerville, it's imperative that we do not lose our sense of history and place," said Mayor Curtatone. "This funding will help ensure that strong development does not result in a loss of our past and of our heritage. "

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